

Welsh
THE 1607/1082.
VALE OF FELICITY,

OR,

SYLVAN HAPPINESS:

POURTRAYED IN

A SERIES OF LETTERS,

MORAL AND ENTERTAINING.

BY A LADY.

Calm are the Pleasures of a rural Life,
At Distance far from Folly, Noise, and Strife.

RETIRED PLEASURES.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON,

PRINTED FOR A. HAMILTON,

No. 5, Russel-Court, Covent-Garden.

1791.

NOTICE

OF THE

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

IN A

CASE

IN

THE

COURT

OF THE

LONDON

FOR THE

RECORD



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Letters contain the genuine Correspondence of several amiable Ladies, describing the happiness of a Country Life, and the heartfelt pleasures of real Friendship; that they pourtray in lively colours the tranquil felicity of sylvan Retirement, must be acknowledged by every Reader, while they hold out and inculcate the most pleasing sentiments of Morality, particularly address to the **BRITISH FAIR.**



THE
VALE OF FELICITY.

LETTER I.

T. W. to R. M.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

WHEN you receive this, I hope
I shall be something nearer
than I have been for many years; at
least, I hope no sea will interfere be-
tween our future correspondence, it
being my intention, since Providence

VOL. I.

B

has

has blessed my industry with affluence, to settle and end my days in my native country : I was happy to hear you was settled, and long for a regular history of your singular situation, and the particular character of your amiable Patron.—I, likewise, have experienced many, and extraordinary occurrences, since we parted from school, which, perhaps, may not be unentertaining to you ; and, when I have fixed the spot for my residence, shall begin, with my friend's permission, a regular correspondence ; till when, I expect you will prepare materials, and begin the work with a prefatory address to me, in answer to this. I hope your sisters, whom I have not the happiness of knowing, are well ; and shall rejoice in



in the pleasure of their acquaintance, especially as my sisters, who will return with me, desire to cultivate some female friendship; and they say, who so proper as my friend's relations, since they have no knowledge of any person now in England, as they were but infants when I took them to — with me. Therefore, I expect a favourable and quick answer, which you may direct for me at Dover, where I may stay, perhaps, a few weeks, till I meet with a situation to my mind. I remain, with sincere and lasting friendship.

Your's,

T. WARTON.

LETTER II.

R. M. to T. W.

I Received your's with the greatest pleasure ; especially as you inform me, we shall not be separated any more by the boisterous seas ; therefore, hope it will not be long ere we shall personally renew that friendship which has so long lain dormant, but which in youth was carried on with ardour.

I most sincerely congratulate you on your increase of fortune : Knowing the innate goodness of heart which
you

you possessed in youth, am persuaded you will be a faithful steward with your talent in riper years; and, as you seem to desire a particular history of my situation, and character of my Noble Patrons, think you were not a little self-interested by the request. Be that as it may, I forgive you knowing, that you will not only take the precept, but practise the example.

From your desire to form an acquaintance among the female branches of our families, you seem to anticipate every wish of me and mine.—Your sisters are mine already, mine are your's, and they ardently long for an opportunity to commence a correspondence. To hasten which, I have it in commission

sion to send a most particular invitation for all the females you have brought over with you, to sojourn with us till you have fixed your residence; and my sisters say, they absolutely will not be refused—so, preparations are making, and they must bring the answer with them; therefore, beg our best respects to all, and am, dear Sir,

Your's,

R. MITFORD.

LETTER

LETTER III.

M. W. to T. W.

DEAR BROTHER,

WE arrived safe on Saturday night, after a great fatigue, which was amply made amends for by your worthy friends, the first hour of our coming amongst them. The politeness of our reception, the refined elegance of manners, the admirable neatness of the place, and the hospitality of the owners, are far beyond the description of my pen. Suffice it to

B 4

say,

say, we are all wonder and ecstacy; and we only wish you here, to be fully sensible of the merits of the incomparable inhabitants of this delightful village. I know not what to call it, for it surpasses every idea I could ever form of this terrestrial world. The order, neatness, affability, condescension, and good-humour which pervade every one, from the amiable Lord and Lady of the Manor down to the veriest rustic, for I must not say lowest, as there are no poor properly so called, nor disorderly persons, in this place.

I hope my dear brother will come and take a survey of this wonder of the world; and take, even if it is but a faint copy, to draw out his plans upon,

as

as he is beginning, as it were, a new life; and though I would not be thought envious, yet, I confess, I think it a pity there should be but one place like it. But I crave you pardon for advising; and, for the present, conclude, wishing you every success, and a speedy settlement in likeness to this. My sister must send her opinion next post, for we cannot possibly be both writing at once. Adieu, dear brother.

Your affectionate sister,

M. WARTON.

LETTER IV.

GEORGIAN WARTON

TO

T. WARTON.

EXCUSE my seeming neglect in not sending you by last post; but my sister informed you we could not both spare time for writing at once; and as we are closely in confidence, and know each other's thoughts, I shall not run over the same track Maria did in her's, as both our sentiments are equal in respect to this eighth wonder of the world; therefore shall begin
with

with an account of the day after our arrival.

It was Sunday ; at seven o'clock in the morning we were all summoned to prayer, which was performed with great devotion in my Lord's private chapel, (to which there is a private door from Mr. M's house) by one of my Lord's Chaplains ; and to which as many of the villagers as choose may come ; and the greatest part of them, I am informed, generally attend. After prayers we went to breakfast, about half past eight, and then retired to dress for the church, which is at some distance from the village, and where we heard a most excellent discourse from my Lord's Chaplain ; for I should

have told you, that my Lord and Lady have each of them one ; the other read prayers : In the afternoon, my Lady's preached, and my Lord's read prayers. Perhaps you may think me too particular, but I think I cannot. The church is fitted up in the neatest manner, and there is an excellent organ ; the younger part of the villagers, of both sexes, make an excellent choir, assisted by the two schools, of which you may hear more hereafter.

After service, we returned to dinner, and one of the Divines with us, a most amiable and accomplished man he seems ; and your friends here say they are both an honour to the cloth. The rule is, one to dine at my Lord's,
and

and the other at Mr. M's, every Sunday alternately; and, in my opinion, a most excellent method to preserve decency and religious decorum.

On that day the conversation was truly edifying, without being dull or tedious; the chearful, lively manner in which every one bore a part, had the most happy effect; and the Rev. Mr. Dean has the most delightful method you can possibly conceive of correcting an erroneous word, or checking an opinion repugnant to the principles of religion and the sanctity of his profession.

Well, after an hour or two's conversation, we returned to church to the
afternoon

afternoon service, and from thence took a delightful walk round the park, which is composed of such beauties as I shall not pretend to make you anticipate, before you partake of its pleasures. I now think it high time to subscribe myself,

Your's, affectionately,

G. WARTON.

LETTER

LETTER V.

T. WARTON

TO

GEORGIAN AND MARIA WARTON.

WITH what exquisite pleasure, my dearest sister, do I peruse your most agreeable account of your present situation. I am, I can assure you, almost ready to participate of your happiness before I have finished my business of settling; but the delay would be inexcusable while we are so separated; I think, however, I shall soon make up my mind on this affair,

as

as I have seen several places I approve of, but should have been glad had you both been with me in choosing, though I would not wish to interrupt the felicity you have just begun to taste.— Whenever I send, you must let Mrs. Herbert come, for I shall be absolutely lost without some of you.

I make one letter serve you both, to be revenged on you for not both writing by one post; but suppose when I get among you, I shall find your excuses ready. Present my sincere respects to all your amiable friends, and believe me your forlorn brother, till I see you all.

T. WARTON.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

MARIA WARTON

TO

T. WARTON.

POOR FORLORN BROTHER,

DO make haste, and come among us; but, above all things, I charge you, for our sakes, for love's sake, and for your own, to keep your heart whole and entire. I know it came safe to England, but pronounce it for ever ruined, if you bring it not safe to this Vale of Felicity. We must spare Herbert—but that is all—so, adieu. We are all well.

M. WARTON.

LETTER VII.

R. MITFORD

TO

T. WARTON.

THE most sincere thanks do I return my friend, for his kind compliance in obliging us with his amiable sisters; they are, indeed, amiable and lovely. My sister declares so firm an attachment, that I apprehend it will be no easy matter to separate them, nor do I wish it. As to Mrs. Herbert, she seems to be an extraordinary being; and I wonder not, that,
under

under so judicious a person, the accomplishments of your sisters are so conspicuous. I understand there is something strange in her history, which I have not yet learnt, but may expect it, I suppose, when you commence your's.

Receive our utmost acknowledgments and respects; and have the happiness of styling myself

Your inviolable friend,

R. MITFORD.

P. S. We long to see you here.

LETTER

LETTER VIII.

T. WARTON

TO

GEORGIAN AND MARIA WARTON.

DEAR SISTERS,

I Have at last accomplished my purpose, and hope I have suited all your tastes by my choice. Maria, I think, seems more in love with the Parsonage House than mine, as she speaks so highly of the Reverend Divine. I make not the least doubt of his being deserving of all her praise; and should not have taken any notice of

of it, only as she desired me to keep my heart till I come among you. I needed not that advice, for mine has been there ever since my return to England's happy shore; and I hope to be with you on Wednesday next, for two or three days. I have, I assure you, seen nothing yet which would endanger my peace; yet seem apprehensive of the consequences of this visit; therefore hope you'll prepare the way for me. Make my best respects to all. I remain,

Your's, at present,

T. WARTON.

LETTER

LETTER IX.

MISS SELINA MITFORD

TO

MISS HUET.

OH! my dear Huet, I received your's with joy and sorrow, and acknowledge you have had reason apparently to doubt my friendship, but spare me this once, and be assured I know no diminution of friendship, to you, and will never again give you cause to suspect it, I have new friends, 'tis true, and my friends must and shall be your's, for I will know none else,

else, and to that end I make you my confidant in love, as well as friendship. Upon Wednesday last, oh, day of days, it gave an additional happiness to our delightful village, by the arrival of, dare I say more than man—No, it was a man, in whom all the elegance of nature and art seems combined to make him perfect, my dear Kitty, that made an impression I never before experienced, on my mind, heart and senses, almost instantaneously—indeed, the account his sisters gave of him operated powerfully before he came, for you must know it is my new friends' brother; and I am ashamed to say, I was almost unable to conceal my emotion. On Saturday, or Monday, he leaves us, but not me in suspense, for
his

his amiable sister, Georgian, told me the day after his arrival, that she hoped my heart was disengaged, and told me her brother was my professed admirer from the first moment he saw me, and pleaded so powerfully for me to admit him, that I was almost incapable of resisting. She flew to him, and the first opportunity after, which she took care to make so, on led the adorable man to my feet,—and, with the most modest and affecting grace, humbly pleaded the bewitching power of love, and vow'd eternal fidelity ; told me I was the only fair that ever had the least influence over him ; that, though it was sudden, it was because he had never seen perfection before, as he was pleased to term it, and that if I could excuse

cuse his want of eloquence to plead his own cause, he would present a heart untainted by the vices of the age; a heart always attached to my family, always having a presentiment for an attachment to what belonged to his friend, and assured me he made England his peculiar desire on that account; that though he, in seeing my brother's family, did not expect to be soon captivated, yet thought he should meet a partner for life, capable at least of being a friend, and begged that if I could not love him, if my heart was not engaged, that I would not suffer him to despair.

This, my friend, was the substance of this incomparable man's discourse; and, for the soul of me, I could not carry

female decorum so far as to deny a partiality for him.

Surely there must be something more than ordinary in love like our's—so sudden, so unexpected, and I hope and think happiness must go with and remain with us: he gained my consent to ask my brother's permission, though I am under no apprehensions on that head, as I know his regard for him is unbounded. I hope my dear friend will take this as an excuse, and I beg you will never accuse my friendship any more.

I am ever

Your's,

SELINA MITFORD.

LETTER

LETTER X.

MISS SELINA MITFORD

TO

MISS HUET.

WELL, now I hope my friend will not complain of inattention, since I take the most early opportunity of acquainting you with my progress in matters of love; for, between that and friendship, I am all taken up. Mr. Warton made his sad case known to my brother, who, you know, is a true philanthropist, and, therefore, could by no means suffer a fellow being to remain in misery.—

C 2

No;

No; he promised a speedy relief, but assured him at the same time, that his sister had been so long with him, and so useful to the village, that he could by no means possibly spare her but on one condition.

“ And what can that be?” Warton eagerly cried. “ Any thing in my power must and shall be done to remedy any inconvenience. Tell me the conditions asked, nor keep me longer in suspense.”

“ Why then,” replied he, “ I must have an exchange; your sister Georgina claims all my respect and love; that agreed between us, all is settled.”

Wit

With what joy and rapture did Warton receive this intimation.—

“And can my dear friend think,” said he, “that I wanted a moment to consider of the happiest event of my life? “If my sister receives your affection becoming her, she is ten thousand “times dearer to me than ever.”

So now you see we are like to have a double wedding, and I shall insist on it that you make one among us: we have not yet settled the time, but my next, perhaps, may acquaint you more about it. Adieu.

SELINA MITFORD.

LETTER XI.

MISS HUET

TO

MISS SELINA MITFORD.

RECEIVE, my dear friend, my most sincere congratulations on any addition to your happiness, especially of that kind you are so obliging as to communicate to me. I hope you pardon freely my unkind thoughts of you, and promise never more to offend. I am highly pleased at the account of your friends, and long to be introduced to them, as I have a strong partiality already for them, am particularly delighted

lighted at the thoughts of a double union, and think, with you, happiness will attend your sympathetic affection, the genuine source of matrimonial felicity.

I think, however, you are too extravagant in your description of Mr. War-ton, yet can easily excuse you, since I am pretty confident he is your first love. I suppose a difference of years betwixt you; now I always would wish my husband (should I ever have the good fortune to get one) to be, at least, ten years older than myself: but you seem to forget any particulars of that kind, and likewise to mention how your friend receives your brother's addresses—quite silent with respect to

your friend Maria, and your own sister, who appears forgotten in general.—Is it really so, or does your own approaching happiness render you indifferent to every thing else? I imagine the latter to be the efficient cause—my Lord and Lady are now no more, though all your former letters were full of their praises, and the delightful wonders of your village; but all are now obscured by almighty Love.

I have got my mamma's permission to wait on you, when you are pleased to send the summons, in expectation of being honoured as a bride's maid—till then adieu.

Your's.

P. S. Pray my best respects to all.

LETTER

LETTER XII.

MR. WARTON

TO

MRS. AUSTIN.

DEAR SISTER,

IN the name of myself and sisters, I acquaint you with our safe arrival, not only in England, but nearly on the land of matrimony. I thought it, considering our mutual love, little less than a duty we owe to one of the best of sisters, to acquaint you before we cast anchor in the haven of happiness, which we have the most flattering ideas of speedily attaining. You will be, no

C 5

doubt

doubt, surpris'd to hear we have made so great a progress in so short a time, but the wonder will cease when you are informed of the particulars.

My dear friend Mitford, whom you have often heard me mention with delight, is the destined husband of our Georgian; and your brother, in exchange, takes his lovely and amiable sister Selina. Maria is charmed with a young divine, whom we think to make happy by a provision among us, as he has only virtue and merit for his portion, which, I believe you will say with me, is a sufficient recommendation for the assistance of the affluent.— I know my dear sister will rejoice with us all on this occasion, and all our desire
now

now is that you and your beloved were among us, to partake of our joy.—We hope the dear pledges of your affections are both well, and depend on your promise to permit them to receive their education among us.—Accept, dear sister, with your spouse, all our sincere and unabated love, with kind respects from all those we have the honour to be among; wishing you a lasting happiness; and that it may be no long time ere you and your's may come and sojourn among us.—I cannot, at present, give you any particulars of my situation—other matters engross my whole attention, but will take an early opportunity.—Farewell, till I can sign

T. AND SELINA WARTON.

LETTER XIII.

MISS SELINA MITFORD

TO

MISS HUET.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I Have now sent you, what I know you ardently desired, a summons to attend our Vale of Felicity. I acknowledge your just reproof of the different tendency of my letters now and formerly; and, with shame confess, I have been wanting to the best and most generous of human excellence, my Lord and Lady, who, I must now acquaint you, have taken an active part in the approaching

approaching happiness of our family; and I have more news to add, which is the marriage of the Rev. Mr. Dean with one you do not know, but will very soon, I mean my friend Maria Warton. It is the pleasure of our noble patrons to have all the nuptials solemnized at once, and I hear there are none in the village in agitation. Mr. Dean and Maria, however, were very close in their amours; for, as he is wholly dependant on my Lord, he smothered his growing passion; but the sagacity of other lovers soon discovered the mutual attachment between them, and made known the dreadful secret. Mr. Dean is all modesty, but our brother means to act noble towards him, and he certainly is a man of great merit. As to
my

my sister, the object of her fixed affections is far from home, but she has good hope of his speedy return to crown her happiness. I wish you would bring some one to reside among us, and then methinks I should be well pleased. I return my sincere thanks to your mamma, for her kind indulgence in permitting you to come, however, and beg my love to your sister. Be very quick in coming, for the happy day is fixed: I know not how I shall get through it.

Mr. Warton and Hrs. Hester are gone to prepare the house for my Ladyship's reception; as, to be sure, he will have every thing in order, not to fatigue his best beloved. That this,
my

my dear, may be yours, as well as my
happy lot, will be always the earnest
wish of

Your

SELINA MITFORD.

P. S. We all join in respectful love
to you.

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

MARIA WARTON

TO

MR. WARTON.

OH ! my ever dear, ever indulgent brother, how shall I by words or actions, ever in any part acknowledge the infinity of my obligations to you or your beloved friend. No words nor pen can paint the never-ceasing gratitude of myself and Mr. Dean: but must leave him to speak for himself, since I find at present a heart so overflowing with veneration for all and

I every

every thing around me, that I am really incapable of thinking, or acting in any manner as I ought to do, but am certain my dear brother participates every joy of his sisters, and I trust they equally do in his approaching happiness with the most amiable of women.

Sure never was one family in prospect of so much supreme happiness, as at present awaits us. My Lord, with a condescension only peculiar to himself, has kindly offered to give you your amiable spouse, and your happy sisters also to theirs—haste, my dear brother, for there is a vacuum without you.

We

We all regret my Lord has signified his wishes that our nuptials be performed in his private chapel, by Mr. Spicer, on a Sunday: at the same time four other young couple of the village are to be made happy with each other by his bounty.

In honour of us, he at the same time proposes that we should strictly conform to the Church of England's intent, in all attending the Communion after our nuptial benedictions; as, he observes, a happy and good beginning is likely to be productive of permanent felicity. We all agree with one consent to so good, so proper a proposition.

Great

Great preparations are making for a general rejoicing on the approaching week, and every creature seems indeed to partake of it.

Adieu, my most dear brother, with love to Mrs. Herbert, whom I hope you will not fail to bring with you, and accept the same from all.

Yours,

MARIA WARTON.

LETTER

LETTER XV.

MR. WARTON

TO

MR. MITFORD.

DEAR FRIEND,

FROM my sister Maria I have the satisfaction of hearing that best of men's intention with respect to the celebration of our nuptial day. Nothing could be more congenial to my warmest wishes ; and since all of you, as well as the partner of my heart, approve of it, what can be more appropriate to the occasion, than that we dedicate the day, which we hope will be the happiest of
our

our lives, to Him, who, in the wise dispensations of his providential care, has thought fit to bless us in each other, and that in circumstances of ease and affluence. I do not mean the only happy day (God forbid) but the beginning of a lasting happiness—an object truly desirable to every Christian.

My Lord and Lady are entitled to all our sincere thanks, for thus presenting us with every thing good and agreeable.

I have received a letter from the Reverend Mr. Dean, full of modest, but grateful acknowledgments: I should be glad to dispense with them, as I am
certain

certain I can do no more than my duty. Oh, what a valuable acquisition is such a friend and brother!

I think the greatest care I have had is now over, which was, to see my beloved sisters all happy and settled: It was my fixed determination never to sway or cross their inclinations, since I knew the innate goodness of their hearts would not suffer them to make an improper choice. My sister Anna has met with a worthy man, who adores her, and of whom you will be more informed when we relate our promised Memoirs, which had, perhaps, ere this been far advanced, had we never seen the Vale of Felicity, nor been prevented by all-conquering Love.

My

My habitation is tolerable well settled by the exertions of my good Mrs. Herbert ; and we hope to be with you on Friday at farthest. You will oblige me by delivering those small caskets to our respective brides, according to directions ; and beg you will spare any one the trouble of noticing them, further than obliging the donor by wearing them on the bridal day.

Accept a small token of esteem yourself ; and, with the greatest submission, I entreat you will present my Lord and Lady a similar token. I should be unpardonable to forget your amiable sister Matilda, and our brother Dean. His I would not have you present till after the ceremony.

I have

I have been thus particular, because I do not desire any interruption of the happiness I fondly anticipate in your company and conversation; when I come among you.

My cordial and respectful love to all, and I remain in the strictest bonds.

T. WARTON.

LETTER

LETTER XVI.

MISS MATILDA MITFORD

TO

MISS ARABELLA FOSTER.

DEAR FOSTER,

IN my last I acquainted you with the change that was going to be among us, as well as with the character of our amiable friends, and the preparations which were making for the celebration of the nuptials of seven couple; no common thing in history, I believe. And now I take the earliest opportunity

VOL. I.

D

nity

nity of informing you of the great event taking place.

Mr. Warton arrived here on Thursday evening last, to the great joy of the whole village; the people of which, on hearing of his arrival, flocked about our house, and expressed their satisfaction in loud and reiterated huzzas; the church bells were set a ringing, and every demonstration of joy was exhibited among the happy villagers. After a short time had passed, he appeared in the balcony, and in an affecting speech, fraught with good sense and politeness, thanked them for the goodwill they had shewn towards him; at the same time assuring them, he should endeavour to become acquainted with
the

the whole of them before he left the happy Vale. The people then dispersed with countenances expressive of happiness, and without that noisy tumult and disorder which generally mark numerous meetings on similar occasions.

On Friday he paid a short visit to Lord and Lady —, as we afterwards understood, to settle some pecuniary matters for the young couples who were to be united. He returned to our house to dinner; when, I can assure you, we enjoyed a degree of social pleasure and happiness, before unknown even to us. Saturday was no less agreeably spent, though, you may

depend upon it, we were all busily employed.

Miss Huet and myself were up by day-break on Sunday, to attend the blooming brides; and about eight the important business of the toilet was settled. Indeed, my dear Foster, it was an enviable sight—but why should we envy?—No, the sight was delightful—they were all attired in white, pure and spotless as their virgin honour, and the elegance of art, blended with the simplicity of Nature, heightened their general appearance. The generous and noble Warton had sent a casket of jewels to each, of equal beauty and value, with which they were adorned; and, perhaps, the Graces were never
more

more conspicuously seen than in these three lovely nymphs ; but far beyond the lustre of these glittering ornaments appeared their native and becoming modesty—a gem the brightest that can grace a woman.

A little after eight, my Lord and Lady did us the honour of breakfasting with us, as did also the four young couple of the village, arrayed for the occasion, according to my Lady's order ; who, indeed, provided them for the occasion. Sure, never was a sight light this ! Kings might with pleasure have foregone their regal pomp, and been proud to have joined the happy throng ; all was chearfulness, mingled with respect, on that day, I assure you.

The affability of our Noble Patrons, who are quite alike to all on such occasions, reflects an honour upon them, more to be prized than the laurelled hero's fame.

Mr. Spicer attended, and made a short prayer, suitable to the day and occasion; and as soon as breakfast was over, we retired to the Chapel. The parents, brothers, sisters, and other relations of the village couples were permitted to be present at the ceremony, and each father gave away his daughter; but as to ours, Lord — took that on himself. I trembled for all the brides; who did not behave so well, I think, as you and I should, had it been our lot; but we must forgive

give them, and allow a little for female squeamishness.

Mr. Warton and my dear Selina were first bound in the Hymeneal chain; my brother and the beautiful Georgian next; and then our Reverend Divine and the sprightly Maria; after them the four other happy pairs, according to their ages. When the ceremony was over, my Lord, with a gallantry and complacency peculiar to himself, saluted the blushing brides all round, and then escorted us back, as we went through the private door.

After an hour's sprightly chat, we separated till service, when one and all received, by the hands of Mr. Spicer,

the holy Communion. We attended service that day only at my Lord's chapel, and we dined at my brother's : My Lord thought it best to keep our rustic companions with us, to prevent any disorder on that day. Our Patron retiring about nine o'clock, the happy villagers took their leave ; and I assure you, no description of my pen can do justice to the harmony of the day. We withdrew our blushing beauties about ten o'clock, and the gentlemen were not long in breaking from each other.

Thus have I given you a faint idea of this day's joy and solemnity ; but my next will, perhaps, entertain you better, though I do not say we all think so. I forgot a chief article, so must tell you

you now. After dinner, the generous Warton gave, by my brother's hand; a packet to Mr. Dean, containing Bank notes to the amount of two thousand pounds, as a marriage dowry, and the presentment of a living, which he has purchased, in the manor he has taken, of £.300 yearly value, and to each of the four couple, £.50 each; to this generous donation bestowed on the young people, my Lord contributed his mite; such as furnishing a cottage, and procuring a cow, with other necessary trifles, just, as he says, for them to begin the world with. The gratitude of these people may be much easier conceived than described; therefore, I forbear troubling you with more on that head.

D 5

I must,

I must, notwithstanding, acquaint you with Warton's noble behaviour to your friend. You know that Selina and myself had each one thousand pounds left by our honoured parent; and this generous man has not only made a voluntary settlement on Selina of five hundred pounds per annum during life, and her eldest daughter after her, should she be so happy as to have one, but presented unworthy me with the whole of my sister's fortune.

Can it be possible to express a gratitude equal to so exalted, disinterested an act of generosity and benevolence? No; it is beyond my power; I cannot do it—words would vainly be expressed to convey my ideas of it; and when it
awakens

awakens my remembrance, I am lost in wonder and astonishment, and melt in love and ecstacy at the pleasing recollection.

This exalted character, who unites in himself all the various qualities praise-worthy in man, has informed my brother it hurts him not that he is possessed of abundance, as the utmost of his wishes are to become a good and useful member of society, and from a retrenchment of his own superfluities to administer to the wants and necessities of others.

Such unexampled worth and modesty, perhaps, never inhabited the breast of one man. Happy Selina, to

be in such possession ; but I believe
their affection is truly mutual ; they
seem born to adore each other. I am
called ; so once more adieu.

Your's ever,

M. MITFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XVII.

MISS MATILDA MITFORD

TO

MISS ARABELLA FOSTER.

DEAR FOSTER,

I PROMISED my dear friend, a continuance of our rural history, from the commencement of the happiness, I trust, of seven virtuous and blooming couples, fastened in the soft Hymeneal chains in one happy hour. To proceed then with my narrative—The morning was ushered in by ringing of bells, and an universal holiday through

through our happy vale: Every rustic and his favoured nymph were clad in a neat and uniform apparel, provided by my Lady, privately, for the occasion. Our brides came forth, arrayed in fresh and blooming beauties, like the sun emerging from the eastern skies; the worthy bridegrooms had by appointment rose early, to concert the measures for this day of joyful festivity, but our noble Patrons had prevented even the possibility of a wish, by a kind and general invitation to their mansion. Dinner was splendid, and not a person of any consequence was excused.

You must remember, that on these occasions all distinction is laid aside;

Hymen's

Hymen's new votaries, and the modesty of the villagers, would have been gladly excused; yet the affability of all seemed to vie with each other in making this beginning of their happiness equally agreeable to them as our more exalted ones.

As you are so well acquainted with the generous hospitality of our noble entertainers, it is unnecessary for me to enter into the particulars of the dinner; but cannot help mentioning how agreeably our ears were saluted by an unexpected band of music, which his Lordship's care had selected for our amusement.

After

After an hour's agreeable and lively conversation, a walk was proposed, in the course of which we were surprised by the appearance of about fifty or sixty beautiful children, of both sexes, from the schools, arrayed in white, with favors, and ranged in couples, to strew flowers before us to a beautiful lawn behind the house, where a dinner had been provided and demolished, unknown to us. The villagers placed themselves all around, and with a cheerful joy bade us a hearty welcome with repeated plaudits : lemonade, orangeat, and negus, were then handed round by these charming children, and the Rev. Mr. Spicer made a most pathetic speech on the occasion of the meeting,

meeting, recommending sobriety, order, and chearfulness; after which the children each repeated a pastoral, descriptive of the event, in a manner that would have done credit to the ablest teacher, and which really astonished us. We partook of coffee and tea amongst them, and our music attending, we were summoned to dance.

My Lord was pleased to open the ball with the beautiful Georgian, and Mitford led out Miss Huet; my Lord insisted on leading all the brides a minuet, so Warton took your friend; and sure there never was a more delightfully happy scene.

My

My Lady, to honour, as she said, the festival, walked out with the graceful and modest Dean, and though both unused to the practice, the one from inclination, and the other from a consciousness of his sacred function, acquitted themselves to admiration.

His Lordship danced separately with every charming bride—"And now, said he, I have performed my best, I'll leave you all at liberty to chuse partners for the rest of the evening."—— Warton then took out the accomplished Miss Huet, Selina and Mr. Dean, Mr. Singer, the organist, and Maria, Mr. Spicer and me, Mr. Alfred, a friend of my brother's, and Georgian,

gian, and the other young couple; each changed their mates for a few hours, and we continued dancing till the approach of night. On a summons for supper, we retired to a small distance from the lawn, where, under canopies a cold collation was served for the whole village; and such regularity and decorum sure never was before witnessed.

After supper, his Lordship conducted us into an orchestra, furnished with every instrument; and, he said, as he knew we were all professors of that delightful science, he would accompany our voices and instruments on the bass viol, as a treat that could not fail, from its novelty, delighting every hearer.—

My

My brother took the flute, Mr. War-
ton the hautboy, Mr. Singer an horn,
to some small distance; Georgian played
the harpsichord divinely, Maria the
piano forte, Selina the harp, Miss
Huet the lute, and myself the guitar;
Mr. Alfred the violin, and the two Re-
verend Gentlemen played on the Ger-
man flute: We all accompanied with
our voices; and the astonished villagers
lost none of the harmonious sounds.
Her Ladyship declared she never was
more happy, nor she believed nothing
could be better adapted to please and
delight the villagers.

I forgot, I believe, to mention that
the park was superbly illuminated; its
grandeur and striking effect exceeded
every

every description. The caution observed by these best of people in the management of the whole, prevented any from intruding but those for whom it was intended. We had every refreshment in the greatest abundance, and retired about twelve, amidst the heartfelt acclamations of the multitude who were assembled.

In further celebration of these happy events, we are to have a ball, to which all the neighbouring Gentry will be invited: Much should I rejoice could you make one of the party; but as that is impossible, I must submit to lament what I cannot enjoy, the honour of your company, which is at all times a source of pleasure to me, but would
be

be particularly so on this occasion.—
you shall not, however, be without an
account of the festivity—that task I
impose upon myself, to the best of my
poor abilities. Believe me, my ever
dear friend,

Your's, affectionately,

M. MITFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XVIII.

MISS MITFORD

TO

*MISS FOSTER,**in Continuation.*

I Closed my last letter with an account of Monday's festival; which, though not so magnificent as Tuesday's, yet, I believe, afforded much more true happiness. His Lordship had sent a card of general invitation to all the Nobility and Gentry for many miles round the country, to partake of a ball in honour of our dear friends, at his own Assembly Room, and an elegant

supper at his house. The company assembled early, and were refreshed with coffee, tea, &c. &c. in the pavillions which we made use of on Monday for our rural pastimes. The company were near three hundred in number; and a great concourse of people assembled to behold the enlivening scene. Our amiable brides would gladly have declined the intended honour, but none were excused; even the villagers were not forgotten, being, at the earnest request of the whole company, sent for; their truly simple and amiable manners won the hearts of the great; and Lord —, and Mr. Warton's generous conduct having got wind, was made an example. The Duke of M—, with a most bewitching accent, entreated the

the

the company to imitate their benevolent act, and immediately, with the utmost grace and condescension, commenced the subscription, by putting five guineas into a flower basket, and became the humble advocate of rural innocence and love; in which he so well succeeded, as to collect near one hundred pounds, which he divided equally; then taking his own purse, and entreating for three others, in the most affable manner saluted the brides, presented each of them with a purse, and promised to be god-father to the first child which came among them.— Lord Townly followed the Duke, and with the greatest good-nature, promised to become sponsor to the second, and bring a god-mother with him, which

he supposed his Grace had forgot, but would no doubt rectify. His Grace immediately replied he certainly would, and cordially thanked his Lordship for the hint.

This gallantry in those two Noblemen spread like lightning throughout the room, and the gentlemen became emulous who should have the like privilege to the remaining two couples; when Lord —, in the most agreeable and lively manner, proposed they should be candidates, and the fair part of the company voters. This motion meeting with general approbation, the election speedily commenced, and the greatest show of fair hands being declared in favour of the Marquis of T—,

T——, and Sir Charles Saville, those gentlemen were declared duly elected ; and the Honourable Miss Jervoise desiring the office of Secretary, immediately registered their names in her memorandum book, which was copied by most present.

You may be assured, my dear friend, that during this agreeable contest, the young and amiable couple were not without manifest confusion, which was increased by the compliment paid to them by the Ladies and Gentlemen, who all declared they should be happy to attend the sacred ceremony, which Lord ——, our hospitable entertainer, promised, should such an event take place again ; which was, to invite the

present company to attend ; and added, that he hoped some of our own dear friends might be ready by that time to take a part on the occasion ; and did not doubt, should they all want it, there would be candidates enough to be found.

My Lord then begged permission for the young villagers to retire, as he was confident the unbounded generosity and good-humour of the company had overwhelmed them with gratitude.— This request was, at length, reluctantly complied with, and the good wishes of the whole attended their departure.— You may believe our beloved friends had no small share of the general congratulation ; and the tribute was not
constrained,

constrained, but flowed spontaneously from the heart. Such emanations of the mind cannot be described by words, I shall, therefore give you a list of our handsome partners, and an account of the dancing.

The Duke entreated of my brother the favour of Georgian's hand, which was readily complied with; and the accomplished Marquis of T— took Selina; Sir Charles Saville danced with Maria, and Lord Townly your humble servant, who bestowed many compliments, and said a number of agreeable things. But, believe me, my heart was far from this place of joy; therefore paid no more than a polite attention to what he said; though, I think,

had Captain Williams been my partner on this happy event, I could with pleasure have listened to all he might have said to me ; but this was not the case ; however, I will give my Lord the credit of being an accomplished man, capable of attaching a heart not already disposed of, by his superior attractions and affable manners.

Sir George Montague paid uncommon attention to Miss Huet, whom you must acknowledge, both from her natural charms, and acquired accomplishments, is a most amiable and engaging young woman ; and I assure you she is equal in the esteem of all your friends in the Vale of Felicity, for now our village is called by no other
name ;

name; nor can any other name be more aptly applied to the happiness of its inhabitants.

Pardon the digression; but I must acquaint you, that we all performed wonders; though I will not pretend to inform you of every pair that danced, or to class the partners; suffice it that I acquaint you of the circle of our own intimates. My brother opened the ball with the celebrated Miss Coke, of Coke-Hall, a lady no less remarkable for her beauty than her coquetry; but the grace which she displayed on this occasion, seemed to ravish ever beholder. There were about four or five minuets danced, and then country-dances began, which were kept up with great

spirit till half past one, when our company was desired in the supper room. This was elegantly decorated, and every delicacy in season decked the table. About four o'clock, as the Sun was rising in all his eastern splendour, our noble company broke up, amply gratified with the hospitable entertainment; which, altogether, exceeded any thing ever seen at this place.

As soon as usual visits of formality are over, we are going on a party of pleasure to the metropolis, Lady Savoy having most politely offered us the use of her house during our stay, which we most cordially accepted. So, if you hear no more of us till we get to London, or, for ought I know, till we return,

return, you must not be surprised ; for I fear I shall have little or no time for communication before. However, if opportunity offer, I shall not fail to oblige my dear Foster.

M. MITFORD.

LETTER XIX.

MISS MATILDA MITFORD

TO

MISS ARABELLA FOSTER.

MY DEAR FOSTER,

THE die is cast ; and your Selina now—oh, what shall I say she is !—Why, I hope, firmly fixed in the seat of happiness for life, in the filken band of Hymen. Little did I think, when last I saw my valuable and dear friend, that my heart would have taken so sudden a flight from its habitation, much less that I should so soon become
a wife ;

a wife; but when the amiable and gentle Warton pleaded the cause of Love, what maid could hear without emotion, especially your Selina, who, perhaps, was first enraptured at his appearance; though if I may believe, what I ought from his generous behaviour, the little blind God did not do his work by halves, since both seemed captivated in the same moment; and, indeed, I am his past redemption, nor have I even the power of repentance, so great is my happiness, and that not altogether on my own account; for my brother, the same moment that possessed me of Warton, gave to me a sister, in espousing my husband's sister, who may be stiled perfection; and our worthy Mr. Dean shares every conjugal

felicity with another sister of my adored husband's. Our happiness is complete. Let me entreat you to join the joyful band at Lady Savoy's, in London, till when I shall leave you to form your own opinion of this memorable event. Adieu.

I am for ever,

Your's,

SELINA WARTON.

LETTER

LETTER XX.

MRS. WARTON

TO

MISS HUET

AFTER travelling near two days, we wanted nothing but the company of our dear Miss Huet to add to our agreeable journey. We arrived in the metropolis, and found every thing, by order of the polite Lady Savoy, in complete readiness for our reception, for which her Ladyship is certainly entitled to our warmest gratitude.

Mr.

Mr. Warton has not been in London for a number of years, and his sisters never; therefore, we perhaps should have been in a disagreeable situation, had we been obliged to have procured lodgings for ourselves, being, as you know, totally unacquainted with these things.

The agreeable Miss Foster joined us two days after our arrival, by my sister's invitation (who, you know, are bosom friends) and as she is well acquainted with the town etiquette, we shall find her, no doubt, an useful, and agreeable companion. She introduced us, the first night of our arrival, to the play, where our party made a conspicuous figure; and through the connections

tions of Miss Foster we received not a few fine compliments. But oh! my dear Huet, how insipid and dull are these things now to us!—I say us, because we all appear cemented in the same bonds of friendship and conjugal felicity.

To you, my friend, I speak, for I know your generous sentiments are congenial with my own; the things we are to see are novel, indeed, but we want no addition to our happiness, nor could any novelty or dissipation fill one vacuum, were we absent from each other. Each happy day brings its joys with it, and my adorable husband makes every moment subservient to my happiness: Oh, Selina! where, how, or when, can
thy

thy grateful heart, in terms of pious fervor, sufficiently adore the Supreme Giver of all, for this his perfect gift of the best of Christians, husband, and friend!

Excuse, my dear friend, the overflowing of my soul, since I cannot hide the inmost recesses of my heart from you. I am indeed all joy and gratitude; nor do I think I shall become a convert to the pageantry of a playhouse, since I am not a constant frequenter of them. I hope in my next to give you a description of the Abbey Music-meeting, from which we expect great satisfaction, particularly as their Majesties and the princesses are to be present, whom we have never had the honour of seeing.

Accept

Accept our warmest wishes for your health, and hope your mamma and sisters enjoy that invaluable blessing; and believe us to be, with the most cordial esteem,

Ever your's,

SELINA WARTON.

LETTER

LETTER XXI.

MRS. WARTON

TO

MISS HUET,

in Continuation.

MY EVER DEAR FRIEND,

ACCORDING to promise in my last, I will attempt to give you a description of the Music at the Abbey, but my feeble powers are unable to do justice to what beggars all description. The doors were opened by nine o'clock, and by ten we seated ourselves commodiously in one of the side galleries; our situation

situation was particularly agreeable to Miss Foster, who was thereby gratified with a full view of their Majesties' box, as also the entire command of the orchestra. It was fitted up in the most magnificent style, and is not in the chapel, as we in the country supposed, but in the body of the Abbey, surrounded by the monuments of our illustrious ancestors; the orchestra consisted of rows of seats one above another, at the top of which were placed a large pair of kettle drums, and just below these an organ of an amazing magnitude, but which had not, to me, the most pleasing appearance.

The Abbey was filled about eleven o'clock, and consisted of about three thousand

thousand persons of the first distinction. About a quarter before twelve their Majesties entered, and the whole band struck up in the most awful, yet delightful manner, till their Majesties and their lovely daughters were seated.

When the grand and noble performance began, never did I before experience such sensations; it at once inspired the soul with heavenly rapture and extatic delight—to describe I cannot; the attempt would be vain: Indeed in my opinion nothing short of what we are taught to believe of Heaven's high choir can equal it. I speak our general sentiments, for you know we are congenial souls. The gracious and beneign looks of their Majesties were
sufficient

sufficient to interest and secure the affection of every beholder; they evinced how much they were interested in the enjoyment of their people's happiness in this solemn, grand, and awful entertainment. It was over about four o'clock, and no one seemed to depart disappointed; and, how could they? For according to my ideas, it must have melted the savage heart, and dislodged the depraved disposition of its habitation, by what I call the terror, though grand and tremendously solemn sounds; and then of a sudden the softer passions were all awakened and attuned to harmony—but I told you I would not attempt to describe, therefore beg pardon of my friend for the frailty of my pen.

Ranelagh

Ranelagh will shortly open; and as we came here in search of pleasure, we are to make a party there, of which I will advise you. Vauxhall is to be another evening's ramble; but I assure you, if what Mr. Warton has purchased for our future residence, be made in any degree like our dear Vale of Felicity, I care not how soon we get from these scenes of gaiety and dissipation.

The Abbey has been the place we have most admired, and the only one where we have not been teized with a set of troublesome beings, called beaux, who seem to make no difference between the married and single, modest, or immodest part of the creation; but are alike impertinent and insulting to all.

We

We spend our mornings rather more agreeable; we have been to a number of exhibitions by day-light, such as the Wax-work, British Museum, Rackstrow's Museum, the astonishing Ox, &c. &c. and, in short, to so many different places, that I must defer an account of them till we meet, which I hope will not be long, as we have some notion of making you in our way to Warton-Grove; for so, with the consent of the best beloved of my heart, I intend to call it, when you may pass the verdict on it in *propria personæ*. We then, if you desire it, may leave you in passing to the happy village; or, if agreeable, on our return from it, as you know we are bound by the strictest honour to visit my Lord and Lady

——, and also to take from the school a girl to be my maid, as we all intend to do. We mean to solicit for the assembly fortune for those we have at present, as a marriage portion, they all seeming inclined to follow the example of their mistresses, which with us, you know is not disapproved, as his Lordship maintains, that the Divine Institution of Marriage is calculated to promote social and domestic happiness, and is beneficial both to Church and State ; where the parties united are so from disinterested principles, and only meet in hope of making each other happy. Indeed our little community proves the position ; in it is no such thing as a discontented or jealous couple ; every one contributes as much as possible

possible to the general tranquility, and the most trifling dispute, his Lordship hears himself with candour, and judges with wisdom and moderation; but my letter will be without bounds if I go on. Therefore I conclude this, expecting you to be ready to accompany us at an hour's notice, and beg you'll accept the hearty and sincere respects of

Your faithful

SELINA WARTON.

LETTER XXII.

MRS. DEAN

TO

MR. SPICER.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

YOUR candour will, I hope, plead my excuse, for not acquainting you sooner with our safe arrival in London; but, as my brother and Mr. Mitford have already, according to promise, sent my Lord a minute account of our late expedition, I believed any further particulars unnecessary.

Mr.

Mr. Warton treats me with uncommon deference and respect; his demeanour and exterior behaviour is generous, liberal, and manly; and I account the happiness of having so dear and amiable a friend, as my adored Maria, one of Heaven's greatest blessings.

His Lordship has made me an ample provision, above my most sanguine wishes; and, amidst a multitude of other kind offices, has ordered, from London, furniture for my house equal to his own; whilst he will not even suffer my grateful acknowledgments, disclaiming merit, amidst profuse liberality. Yet, though my gratitude is prohibited, on pain of giving offence to this disinterested Nobleman, the

Great Disposer of All will accept my unfeigned praise: Him I will ever solicit for the present and eternal happiness of my bounteous donor.

To particularize all the amiable qualities of his Lordship would be an arduous task, to specify the several instances of their beneficial influence, an impracticable one. His bounty is not confined to me alone, but roves at large and is exercised in an universal philanthropy. It is, however, an addition to my felicity that, while our Noble Patron continues to merit the esteem and good wishes of mankind, his lovely bride renders herself worthy his affection, by a congeniality of disposition.

The

The pleasing sensations which occupy my mind I am, at this instant, unable to express in adequate terms; and, to add to them, I can only fondly hope that, from their example, the polite world will be stimulated to emulate their virtues, and imbibe their benevolence. How much more exquisite, my dear friend, are the enjoyments of minds of such a cast, than those sordid, dissipated beings who live only to themselves! I know this exemplary pair will congratulate themselves on their not being found singular in the delightful exercise of charity, and sincerely rejoice that we are blessed with the means of promoting this Christian duty.

All friends here desire their most respectful compliments to him who has borne so considerable a share in contributing to the happiness of them and

Your faithful friend,

MARIA DEAN.

LETTER

LETTER XXIII.

MRS. HERBERT

TO

MR. WARTON.

HONoured SIR,

I Have the satisfaction of informing you, your house is prepared for the reception of yourself and family.— I flatter myself the accommodations will ensure your approbation, by gratifying your expectations. I have endeavoured, by employing proper persons, to have elegance, taste, and convenience judiciously blended, suitable to the rank of yourself and retinue; if, however, any

thing should be wanting, which I have studiously laboured to prevent, (I hope not in vain) your goodness will impute it rather to an error of judgment than intentional blemish.

Having premised thus much relative to myself, may I take the liberty of expecting you soon at this mansion, accompanied by your accomplished spouse. Every person here is anxiously awaiting the happy event. The apartments destined for the reception of Lord C—— and his amiable Lady, are worthy only of such guests, who, like Omnipotence itself, diffuse chearfulness and pleasure amongst all who are acquainted with them.

My

My love to my ever-dear Georgiana, Maria, and, in short, all the happy train that now attend you. I impatiently expect their daily arrival.

Pardon, dear Sir, this impertinent jargon, dictated by a maternal fondness, and a pleasure that can only be heightened by the endearing appellation of grandmother to some little prattlers, the fruits of your marriage, which, I trust, will not be far distant.—Pray, Sir, be expeditious, and remove the anxiety of

Your dutiful and affectionate

E. HERBERT.

LETTER XXIV.

MR. MITFORD

TO

LADY SAVOY.

MADAM,

A GREEABLE to the commission with which I am invested, by the party to whom I have the honour to belong, I return you, in their name and for myself, our highest commendation and acknowledgments, for the polite condescension you evinced towards us, at your Ladyship's hospitable mansion, during the last three months, by the splendor and elegance of your entertainment,

entertainment, aided by your natural gaiety, attention, and unaffected affability. I am also desired, by Mr. Warton, to entreat you immediately to honour his mansion with your presence; he is very importunate, and will not admit of an excuse; for he has proposed, with Lord C——, to visit the Vale of Felicity, where, from the esteem which we entertain for you, your company will be particularly acceptable.

Our amusements have been various in the metropolis, our satisfaction universal; the musical selection from Handel, performed at Westminster-Abbey, gave us the most exquisite delight; the number of performers, with

the harmony of the whole, added to the sacredness of the place, gave rise to ideas more delightful than the Commemoration of the immortal composer, making Heaven itself the object of our contemplation.—Your Ladyship has, doubtless, heard a more particular account of the merits of the different performers than the limits of this letter admit, and from more competent judges than I am; suffice it to say, however, that Volger's performance on the organ was most astonishing.

I am afraid your patience is exhausted; so, begging your Ladyship will signify your pleasure on receipt of this, respecting Mr. Warton's request, that
may

we may, if necessary, inform you of the appointed day of meeting, shall now finish this tedious epistle.

I have the honour to be

Your Ladyship's

Most obedient servant,

R. MITFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XXV.

MISS MITFORD

TO

MISS FOSTER.

DEAR FOSTER,

WE arrived at Mrs. Huet's, after we had reluctantly parted with you; but, as we could not detain you, must be contented.—Miss Huet is blessed with Selina's friendship, and, like yourself, renders herself worthy that honour, by her mental acquirements.

We

We were hospitably received by Mrs. and both the Miss Huets; the former expressed uncommon satisfaction on the meeting of three such amiable couples, and said she should have been glad to accompany us home, but this her infirmities rendered impossible.— Her daughters possess all the endearing qualities of their venerable parent in a superlative degree, the natural result of such a virtuous preceptor's assiduity.

My dear Selina and husband say they allow no excuse, provided you do not visit them at the appointed time, of which they engage to give you the earliest notice, especially as you were absent from the nuptial ceremony and attendant rejoicing.

I must

I must earnestly entreat you will comply with our joint solicitations, to witness the rural felicity we enjoy, and acknowledge our recreations are, at least, equal to the follies and desires of the town; must beg, (for your friend's sake) you will not disappoint our expectations by neglect, and, if you can, send a card of invitation to Belville to meet you there. You will have no occasion to repent such condescension, and confer, at the same time, the most pleasing favour on

Your affectionate friend,

MATILDA MITFORD.

P. S. Miss Huet goes home with us for a month.

LETTER

LETTER XXVI.

MR. WARTON
TO
MRS. HERBERT.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

ACCCEPT my thanks for the trouble you have sustained on my account during my absence.——We have left London, and expect to be with you in a week or ten days at most, therefore wish you would acquaint Mr. Dean's people, that so they may have every thing ready on my arrival, for the reception of their master, mistress, and some company ; likewise to provide
accommodation

accommodation for all the servants, amongst my tenants nearest the house, as we shall not find room enough; you will see what spare rooms and what conveniencies they have, and with a liberal hand, order what you find wanting.

Inclosed I send you my wishes for what I would have to celebrate our nuptials, and depend on you to see it accomplished. I have met with a deserving young Clergyman, whom I have engaged for my Chaplain, and having communicated my intentions to him, and no one else, I recommend him to you as an assistant in this business, which I know is by far too fatiguing for you. I have fully informed Mr. Williams of
every

every particular, and make no doubt but you will exert your endeavours to improve it : I could wish on this occasion to lay aside all parsimony, and entertain not only my friends and tenants, but all around me, who can partake with pleasure another's happiness ; for heaven has blessed me abundantly, and my wish and desire is to distribute to others, as far as in my power. I remain, my dear Herbert, with love and friendship,

Your's

T. WARTON.

LETTER

LETTER XXVII.

MISS MITFORD,

TO

MISS FOSTER.

MY DEAR FOSTER.

I HOPE you will congratulate me on receiving a few lines from my dear Captain, in answer to my brother, to whom Mr. Warton wishes he had sent an invitation to meet us at his house, on our first arrival, to celebrate the nuptials of your friends ; some will say, has it not been done already ? but all that
is

is past, and we are to have another jubilee at his own mansion. Lord and Lady C——, bore the greatest share of the expence before, but in this generous Warton will have no partner : his invitation is general to every one whom we take notice of.

I shall let you know of the Captain's coming for two or three reasons : The first for joy, as it came unexpectedly ; the second for your sake, having sent him word to call and bring you with him ; and the third, because I long to see him introduced to such noble amiable friends, which now are so nearly connected with us.

On

On Saturday evening next we expect all to assemble, for on Sunday we are to appear at the Parish Church in public. A fight, I dare believe, has not before been seen like it, at any town or village; the fair young village couples are not exempt—but I anticipate too much, perhaps, therefore shall say no more, but that

I am for ever,

Your's

M. MITFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XXVIII.

MRS. MITFORD,

TO

MRS. AUSTIN.

DEAR SISTER,

MY brother informed you of the change which was about to take place at the time of his writing to you; a change so sudden, so unexpected, must have given your susceptible heart many emotions for our future happiness, which we well know is dear to you; but the task I am engaged in by my brother and Maria, is not so ardu-

ous as may be imagined, since each of our partners are incomparable.

You have often heard my brother dwell with rapture on the virtues of his friend ; that valuable friend is now my adorable husband, bound by friendship's sacred tie as well as love, for we were on both sides taught to love each other.

Selina, my brother's bride, lovely as she is, possesses all those qualities which will endear her to your friendship ; and the husband of Maria is amiable, modest, pious, and worthy, and whose constant aim is to render herself an inestimable friend to all, desires to have the education of your's and our children.

We

We hope your dear Mr. ———, and self will quickly bring them, to become personally acquainted with their new relations. Enclosed I have sent you a journal of each day's happiness :

Mrs. Herbert begs to be remembered to you and your's, likewise to your happy sister, and in the name of all I subscribe myself

Your's,

GEORGIANA MITFORD.

LETTER XXIX.

MRS. DEAN

TO

MRS. AUSTIN

DEAREST SISTER,

I FEAR you will hardly excuse my inattention in so seldom writing, but am certain, when you are properly acquainted with every circumstance, and personally known to those with whom we are strongly connected, since our arrival in England, I have no doubt but your free and unlimited pardon will be given to all.

My

My brother acquainted you with our intentions, previous to their taking place. My sister has sent you an account of what happened in consequence; and I have taken the pleasing task of continuing our history. On Saturday, after the date of the letter you received, our guests arrived at Mr. Warton's, with an intent, according to the English phrase, of house-warming. Mr. Dean and myself took possession of ours; the establishment of which by the generosity of my brother has far exceeded our most sanguine expectations, and filled our grateful hearts with the utmost esteem and love for him—but to proceed.

We arrived two days previous to our dear brother, and his lovely spouse, to

prepare for the reception of many friends, who were invited to partake of this splendid entertainment: The Parish bells ushered into the village all the noble guests, and by the evening every house was filled with visitants. The good Lord and Lady O——, accompanied our brother and sister.

The Duke of O——, honoured us at the assembly, and the most respectable personages, in the neighbourhood were in his train, by appointment, who all seemed eager to partake of the Jubilee. The four amiable village couples were likewise of our party; but what exceeded all joy was another lovely and blooming couple, who, by the very artful contrivance of Warton
and

and Mitford, and with the privy of Dean, were led to the altar of Hymen, bound in its filken bonds ; in appearance, a lovlier couple were never united, they were Captain Williams and Miss Mitford, the eldest and beautiful sister of Mr. Mitford, and our dear Selina. The trick was thus.—The Captain had long paid his addressee to Miss Mitford, by whom he was equally beloved : He had often pressed her consent to their union, but such was her situation with her brother and sister in our happy vale, that she would not consent to his wishes, unless he made his abode among them ; but he having a company in a marching regiment which was ordered on a distant station, he could not, consistent with the principle

of a man of honour agree to her request till his regiment had performed their duty, and returned to England, which happened to be the case at this happy juncture.

My dear brother had fully learned these particulars from Mr. Mitford, who loves the Captain with fraternal affection—his amiable qualities more so, as seldom to be found in a soldier.—Those two valuable men, wishing Matilda and every one as happy as themselves, obtained the Captain a commission in the guards, as less likely to go abroad, and sent him word of the change. They then pretended to have wrought upon Matilda in his favor, without acquainting her with the object
of

of their endeavours; at the same time requested, as he came through the metropolis, he would bring a license with him. This scheme pleasing the gentlemen, they contrived their spouses, who were acquainted with the plot, should be present at the interview—the first meeting of this lovely pair was accomplished by artifice; they told her he was coming by invitation, and procured a letter to him from her desiring him to bring Miss Foster with him from London; their arrival was interrupted; and Miss Foster being admitted into the scheme, Matilda was led to the concealed spot, where all the traitors and abettors were hid, except Selina, who remained with her till the Captain was announced, and ushered

into her presence. After the mutual embrace of the two sisters, Selina retired to her place of concealment, when a scene ensued I am unable to describe. The moment they were alone, the Captain fell on his knee, and seizing her hand with rapture, exclaimed " Oh !
" Matilda, dearest of women, how
" happy hast thou, by this condescen-
" sion, made thy unworthy slave ? How
" can I sufficiently pour forth my gra-
" titude to you, or those friends, who
" have interested themselves in my
" behalf : Nothing but gratitude and
" love shall ever inhabit the late tor-
" mented breast of thy adored Ed-
" ward——tell me, exclaimed he, kissing her hand ten thousand times, if possible, in a moment, " when will the
" happy

“ happy day arrive on which I can call
“ thee mine.”

Matilda, amazed at what she had just heard, endeavoured to withdraw her hand from that of the Captain, and asked what she was to understand by his last words? “ You know, Sir,” continued she, “ my determination; and I’ll hear
“ her no more till Providence has al-
“ tered your station. You have long
“ known my affection, which it has not
“ been in my power to conceal, and I
“ sincerely rejoice to see you; still how-
“ ever I am under the necessity of de-
“ firing you to quit me, or never more
“ mention what you have just repeat-
“ ed.”

“Cruel Matilda!” cried the noble youth bursting into tears, “Cruel beauty! why were my fond hopes deluded with so flattering a prospect: I go then for ever from the brink of happiness, plunged still deeper into despair——Why suffer me to fall the victim of delusion, or insult my feelings by raising me to the utmost summit of my wishes, then crushing my hopes on the verge of consummation, only to render me still more unhappy?——permit me a last embrace, and I’ll fly for ever.”

Matilda, and the whole company were evidently affected; the gentlemen began to repent their frolic, but none had power to stir.——Matilda sobbed, and

and urging him not to go, said, " I
" have not deluded you; I have not
" insulted you; God forbid! all my
" earthly happiness is centered in you,
" why will you fly? The all protecting
" hand of Providence, will, I am per-
" suaded, give us an opportunity of
" being yet happy, but why should we
" be thus impatient? God in his own
" time, who sees our constancy, will
" reward our affection."

" Oh! life-giving word," replied the
Captain, " you again revive my hopes,
" but was your love as ardent as mine,
" you would not reject the solicitation
" of your dearest friends, nor withstand
" the fond intreaties of your most faith-
" ful and fervent lover. You see Selina

“ happy with a Warton, your brother
“ with a Georgiana, a Dean with a Ma-
“ ria ; their earnest and mutual wishes
“ are to see Matilda so with her Ed-
“ ward ; and that Matilda is insensible
“ of her own happiness .”

“ No Sir,” replied she, “ you mis-
“ take ; it is not so, they are all happy,
“ and next to my own, I rejoice in
“ theirs ; they esteem you, but not one
“ has mentioned the subject as you re-
“ present it.”

“ Infatuated maid,” said the Cap-
tain, “ look on this letter, which
“ brought me to you, satisfy yourself of
“ their wishes :” Matilda read the
letter, but still assured the Captain it was
a for-

a forgery to render them both unhappy: "Pity me," said she, "and pardon my behaviour to you; had I known of this, I should have been prepared to have answered and convinced you of its falsity; but my brother shall see it, and we will endeavour to trace the author."

The Captain remained silent for a moment, but at length clasping her in his arms, exclaimed, "Now can you consider me in fault? do you not think it a disappointment sufficient to render me miserable! Sure a heart of adamant cannot inhabit that divine form to render it callous to the soft incitements of love and friendship.—" "No Matilda," continued the

the Captain, "'tis impossible ! and we
" must not part thus."——Mitford
entered from behind the arras—" No,
" nor shall not, by Heaven, till you
" call me brother !"

Matilda shrieked, and fainted in the
arms of her lover—every assistance was
immediately administered to recover the
gentle fair, who at length opened her
fine eyes, to the unspeakable joy of her
affrighted lover ; this frolic, which had
nearly proved fatal to the lovers, was
sincerely repented of by all parties.

Mr. Warton pathetically related the
scene which by his imprudence he had
occasioned ; but hoped both parties
would pardon him, since his intentions
were

to make them happy ; so saying, he put the commission into Matilda's hand, and added, " see if that obdurate fair " can alter her sentiments— if you " cannot, you love not, since love and " friendship can do no more."

Matilda would fain have knelt to our brother, but he would accept no thanks, only intreated pardon for wantonly sporting with their peace.

The Captain's noble heart was melted with gratitude, which suffused his eyes and disenabled him from uttering a word—he was asked : " Are " you now ready to receive this lady " as a bride ! And are you ready, Madam, to make the best of men happy."

py." The Captain was all extasy, the Lady covered with blushes: he clasped her in his arms, while every tongue rung the persuasive peal, till he exhorted a faint yes; he no sooner announced this pleasing affirmative, than Mr. Mitford desired my beloved to put it out of her power to recede, which she resisted, and was forced a willing victim to the altar; her two bride maids being in waiting, my Lord and Lady C—— were called in, and his Lordship insisting on the same honor he had before among us, gave her to her enraptured Captain.

A Miss Foster and a Miss Huet were the bride maids; and so in the space of an hour, Matilda, from whose thoughts
marriage

marriage was as yet far distant, became a bride to the only man, who had ever made an impression on one of the most perfect and lovely women in the creation, who had long sighed for the object of her affections, ere she would yield consent to be his, urging prudential motives, and that her affection would never, after marriage, permit her to separate from her husband, and the attachment of her beloved brother : the delightful village also invited her to reside where happiness crowned its benevolent inhabitants.

After the ceremony, which was performed in my brother's Chapel, she collected her spirits sufficient to beg it might be kept secret from the rest of
the

the company; and the usual ceremony in such cases being complied with, we separated as if nothing had happened.

Our guests coming in from rambling in different parties soon after, and the usual salutation over, an elegant cold collation was served up, and each were shewn their respective chambers. By the desire of the lovely couple, they retired with us, as did Miss Foster and Huet, with several others who chose to be more retired than they possibly could be should they mix in the general bustle; and the marriage was kept a profound secret from all but those who were witnesses of the strenuous endeavours of Mr. Warton to render his sister happy.

On

On Sunday morning was private breakfasting, some in parties in the garden, others in the saloon, but all repaired to the Church, for so the invitation ran, and the Captain led his bride there in silent triumph. An excellent sermon was preached by the Honourable and Rev. Dr. C——, in favour of conjugal love and domestic felicity, compared with the degeneracy of the age, which seemed to have a most happy effect on a numerous audience.

Dinner was served up in different apartments, exclusive of that in the grand saloon, to which our hundred persons seated themselves. Every thing was conducted in the greatest order, and the company seemed particularly charmed

charmed with the delightful park and woods adjoining.—All retired early to rest, as with one consent, both from respect to the day, and to be prepared for early rising to begin the Jubilee.

The morn was ushered in by the rising sun, bells ringing, and the shepherds neatly and uniformly dressed, tuning their pipes, and serenading the house and park with a variety of rural entertainments, which from the extreme length of this letter I must pass over.

Mr. Warton and Mitford were up to congratulate the company, and conduct them to their appointed places for breakfast, in a beautiful and extensive garden adjoining to the house ; where

art

art and nature seemed combined to spread luxurious delight; here about twenty boys and as many girls were habited in a rural style, and decorated with artificial and real flowers, spreading the walks, as they entered in four divisions to four tables. At one Lord C—— and Georgiana presided; another Warton and Lady C—— a third, Mitford and Selina; the fourth the Captain and his wife. The company were equally divided, and grand pavilions shielded them from the weather. At each table five girls and five boys attended, and excited the general admiration of the company. Behind the different pavillions, a band of music delighted the ears, while conversation rational

tional and entertaining rendered the repast highly agreeable.

When breakfast was ended the company walked into the park, which the villagers had occupied, and were preparing many rural sports; amongst others the noble game of cricket, at which two sets of the young and handsome were selected, who strove for three prizes. The first a plough, the other two of less value. This afforded great entertainment and lasted some hours; during which a cold collation was served with wine, &c. for the common use.

After a sharp contest for the prizes was decided, another set appeared, with
bows

bows and arrows, in manner of the old English archery, in which, great skill and dexterity were displayed; the prizes were three sheep to the best marksmen, two sheep to the second, and one to the third. The archers were neatly and uniformly clad, and their activity afforded great entertainment to the noble spectators.

These amusements being ended, the country people were summoned to dinner, at which about one hundred men women and children were assembled, the dinner consisted of old English roast beef and plumb pudding; there was boiled beef, besides, and several sheep dressed with vegetables of all kinds; and great order and decorum was observed;

served; this plentiful provision, was made in order that the rustics might partake of a supper.

Dinner being ended, the guests retired to the house, to imitate the villagers and every thing in season, both useful and ornamental appeared at the table; a most elegant desert crowned the festive and hospitable board. The Ladies and Gentlemen differed from modern companies, the former deemed it no indecency to remain while the gentleman indulged the bottle. A spacious room was thrown open exhibiting an amazing number of instruments, and we had a number of voices, which seemed to unite every individual as one harmonious soul.

Nothing

Nothing, my dear sister, could equal the seraphic blifs with which all seemed enraptured ; and I am much mistaken, if it does not produce tender scenes between some of the parties present.— The Duke of —— seemed particularly attentive to a Miss L——, who adds to great skill in music and harmony of voice, an elegant figure and amiable disposition.

Lord Townly, who before had paid great attention to Miss Mitford, finding her Captain with her, like a man of honour, has withdrawn his forces of love, and besieged with its whole artillery her friend, Miss Foster, who, abating a little for coquetry, is, indeed, a lovely girl.

Several other young couples seemed well pleased with each other, and particularly attracted by the beauty of the scene, which was well adapted to inspire tender passion. Those who enjoyed the sweets of this terrestrial Paradise, were in no haste to bring it to a conclusion, as they did not break up till a very late hour.

The villagers also shared its pleasures, for the concert being in the lower part of the house, and the doors and windows thrown open, these worthy people partook of the festivity. It was concluded by the rustics who began it, with a ball on the green, in which several of the young Noblemen cordially joined. This over, supper was announced,

nounced, and served with no less decorum and elegance than dinner the preceding day.

I fear my dear sister will think this a tedious letter ; shall, therefore, defer till my next an account of the splendor and conviviality of as noble and worthy an assemblage of beauty and dignity as ever, perhaps, graced the mansion of a private gentleman.

Pray present our most cordial affection to your beloved spouse and children, and believe me to be with the highest sentiments of esteem.

Your's,

H 2

M. DEAN.

LETTER XXX.

MRS. DEAN

TO

MRS. AUSTIN.

IN CONTINUATION.

ACCORDING to promise in my last, I have taken up my pen, to inform my dear sister of our matrimonial Jubilee; though it has placed my brother in an amiable light to all around him, it has not increased our happiness, since that can receive no addition this world can afford. Heaven grant this felicity may continue; though it will

will make life, perhaps, too desirable. Yet, according to the disposition of our amiable Patrons, there seems little doubt of its durability.

I finished my last with an account of Monday's festival, and must now present you with Tuesday's, which was of a most elegant nature. About a mile from the house, at the extremity of the Park runs the Thames, on which there was what in the metropolis would be called a Regatta. The breakfast was much in the same style as Monday's; but many, from the fatigue of the over night, chose their own apartments.

A most magnificent dinner was provided, on board a number of pleasure-

H 3

barges,

barges, or yachts, elegantly decorated, each having a band of music; the company divided themselves by lot, and the same persons presided as at the tables on shore. The day was beautiful beyond description, and a grand salute of cannon was discharged when the company all got on board. They had an agreeable sail of several hours, till dinner was served, when they returned near the park, where seven small boats appeared, with each a young waterman on board, destined to row against tide, for three prizes of twenty, ten, and five guineas; and the boat of each rower, successful or not, was to be his own; they were dressed in a very light, but pleasing manner, and well deserved the reward they contended for; and as the weather

weather proved so favourable, it was a most delightful scene. The spectators on shore were numerous; and after the usual refreshments, the company landed under a discharge of cannon.

In the dresses for the ball, there was an emulation of magnificence which would have done honour to a Court.— As soon as all the company were assembled in the ball-room, Lord C—— desired the favor of speaking a few words, to introduce a daughter. Poor Matilda blushed—but my Lord, taking hold of her by the hand, said, “ Though I
“ promised secrecy at the ceremony, I
“ do not, my dear, think it will be to
“ your honour to keep it so, and to let
“ this noble company part, without
H 4 “ sharing

“ sharing your felicity, which I am
“ well aware they all do : I shall deli-
“ ver my daughter to your protection,
“ and both of you to the friendship of
“ all present.”

“ Ladies and Gentlemen,” continued his Lordship, “ this Lady was
“ absolutely bent against marriage,
“ though she did not deny her attach-
“ ment for this gallant Captain ; but
“ on the first meeting on Saturday,
“ helped by a scheme of her worthy
“ brother’s, and extorting a promise
“ of amendment from her, we insisted
“ on the immediate celebration of an
“ event desirable to the whole family,
“ which, with a promise of secrecy,
“ was happily and instantly concluded,
“ and

“ and I am proud in having the honour of calling her daughter.” He then with a gallantry peculiarly pleasing, saluted the bride, who was covered with confusion ; his example was followed by all the gentlemen present, and the room rang with the congratulations of all present for their lasting happiness, every one declaring the most cordial friendship for the happy pair,

I confess this ceremony was almost too much for any lady to bear ; but not being previously apprized of it, her spirits were not depressed till the moment their exertion was called into action. The tumult of joy having subsided, my Lord said he must do himself the same honour he had before with

his own children, and took Matilda out for the first minuet, which those two accomplished persons went through with inimitable grace, to the admiration of every one present. The Duke of — selected the partner I mentioned before, and a lovely couple they certainly are. Lord Townly and Miss Foster (I beg her pardon for my unjust suspicion of her). Suffice it to say, a more agreeable couple never met.— You will excuse me, I hope, for adding no more of the dancing. We had all partners to our satisfaction; and though no improper assignations took place, yet there were several nymphs and swains, who, I dare say, will often meet again.

The

The domestic happiness which prevails amongst us seems to inspire the gay young men with true ideas of the felicity of a conjugal life, when the objects are possessed of congenial souls, as we are; there we have reason to hope we shall be the humble instruments of promoting the happiness of many.

The Captain expressed his joy at his nuptials being made public, and declares himself the happiest of men. Our noble company kept up the ball with great spirit, and next day was mentioned as a time of separation, but the lovers of harmony, my brother in particular, have entreated another concert before we part, which meets the approbation of all parties, who fear no-

thing but intruding too much ; nor could any other reason ever make them wish to leave so hospitable and delightful a place.

The beginning of Wednesday was spent in various rambling parties. After dinner, on the plain before the house, the concert commenced ; every one bore a part, which far exceeded the utmost stretch of imagination. It was indeed divine, and it was with difficulty we could prevail on ourselves to give up the pleasing task ; but we had one more pleasure to partake of, though it was only a feast for the eyes. We attended a magnificent and superb fire-work, conducted by the same hands who furnish Ranelagh with that species
of

of amusement ; but nothing came near the delightful scene we had before left, which, with one universal consent, we agreed to dedicate two hours more to after breakfast.

I would have mentioned a few names as supremely great ; but the whole was so compleat a band, that it would be injustice to comment on any individual ; and the most refined amateurs of the art must have acknowledged its excellence.

Immediately after this was over, our guests began to take their leave. This was a scene of real tenderness between the visitors and the visited ; and it was mutually agreed to keep up the anniversary

verfary of the feafon at one or other of their country feats, and every one figned a paper, prefented by the Duke of —, as a member of the happy and harmonious fociety. Senfibility was keenly awakened at the parting, fo mutually charmed had the company been with each other. The greater part were driven away by the approach of evening; but a fmall and agreeable party were prevailed on to give us their company a few days longer. Lord C— and his amiable confort remained, as did Lord Townly by his own invitation, who is a professed admirer of Mifs Foster: He is an accomplished man, of courfe agreeable to us, and I believe no lefs fo to her. She is fo full of vivacity fometimes, as to overpower him, which

which she does by way of trying the strength of his affection.

The Captain and his Lady stays a fortnight with us, and then he goes to London for a short time, but does not intend to take a house in town, rather choosing to divide his time of absence from the regiment betwixt us and Mr. Mitford. My brother has accommodated him with a suite of apartments in his house, and Mr. Mitford has done the same.

My Lord C—— and his Lady, Mr. Mitford and Georgiana, and four village couples, leave us in about three or four days. And now, my dear sister, I have given you the best account in my power
of

of the whole; which may, perhaps, have tired your patience as unprofitable reading; therefore conclude with wishing you and your's uninterrupted health and happiness.

Dear sister,

Your's affectionately,

MARIA DEAN.

LETTER

LETTER XXXI.

DUKE OF —

TO

SIR HARRY EVELYN.

DEAR SIR HARRY,

I AM just now arrived from Paradise, a perfect Paradise, I assure you; but how I am, I know not; I want a friend's help and advice in the most serious business of my life. I think I am in love; but whether it is with a woman, or flowing from general ideas of matrimony, I cannot say. The place I have left is certainly a matrimonial Heaven, infusing life and extatic bliss in

in its favourite votaries. Oh, that you had been but a witness to those scenes of delight I have just quitted with regret.

You probably have heard of Lord C——, and a village called the Vale of Felicity. I was there about four months ago, at the celebration of the nuptials of seven amiable couples, and have now been at Worton seat, at a Jubilee given by him, at which all the lovely pairs assisted, and also an eighth marriage took place on the evening the company assembled, but in a private manner, to humour the bride, who is an angel—Captain Williams the happy possessor. Indeed, more beauty and perfection never met, than in the ladies

I have

I have mentioned—vainly did I lament one of them was not destined for me ; but I am sensible I have not deserved the distinction ; and I much fear I shall never meet with one who can confer on me that bliss I have witnessed in those regions of happiness. If there is another divinity on earth, it must be in that circle ; for, indeed, it seems to have diffused its influence, and I have not escaped the force of its power.—

I have seen—and, I believe, love a Miss L—— ; her person is charming ; her mind seems enlightened ; she sings divinely, dances gracefully, and plays delightfully.—In my libertine moments I have adored her ; but now I look for happiness of a more substantial nature ; I want a wife, an exact copy of what
I have

I have seen ; one capable to charm me, and in whose tender disposition and affection I might repose with security.—Whether the one I have mentioned would be this to me, I should like to know—If in the affirmative, I should be the happiest of mortals.—I find I love her with an affection that disturbs my peace.—Assist me, my dear friend, in this dilemma, and do not ridicule the serious conversion of your once gay friend. You know not the difference, perhaps, of modest virtue and unadorned beauty from an assemblage of poor painted ——'s. Oh, horrid name !—too bad to mention ; and I am sorry to say, you and I have sacrificed many a precious hour at the shrine of voluptuousness, and that without any real satisfaction ;

faction; in short, nothing but loss of honour, peace, rest, and constitution. Once more I entreat your advice in this arduous task—tell me how I am to try the temper of my angelic mistress. I shall rely on your friendship, and request your immediate answer, remaining, in the mean time, with the highest sentiments of esteem.

Your's,

G. H.

LETTER

LETTER XXXII.

*MISS HUET**TO**MRS. WARTON.*

DEAREST FRIEND,

ACCORDING to your request, this serves to acquaint you, that I got safe home, but not without a convoy : Captain Wilson met my chaise immediately on my quitting your house : he was on horseback, attended by a couple of servants, and insisted on seeing me safe home. I fancy it was a contrivance of Warton's ; but I must pardon him, as my 'Squire behaved
with

with the most respectful and distant attention, riding close by the door for several miles, till a violent storm gathering, good manners induced me to ask him to shelter himself, which he did with apparent thankfulness; and our discourse turning on the subject of those friends we had just left, he, in the most modest, but affecting manner, declared a passion of the sincerest kind for me, wishing it had been his lot to be among the chosen few, who seemed born to bless mankind, and to become patterns of conjugal affection to the world.—
“ And why, my dear Miss Huet,” said he, “ may not you and I contribute to this great end?—I have seen
“ so much true joy and felicity in those
“ happy mansions, that I from this
“ moment

“ moment declare myself a votary of
“ virtuous love, and an enemy to vice
“ in whatever form it may appear.”—

He pressed my hand with rapture—I was perfectly dumb, and looked so silly as to be ashamed of myself. He urged an answer. I thanked him in the best manner I was able, and applauded his resolution; but told him I could say no further without consulting my mamma. To this he expressed his acquiescence, and begged permission to wait on me home. He asked if my heart was disengaged. I ingenuously answered it was, though I did not say truth, for I found it too much inclined towards him; however, after an agreeable journey, we reached home, and he engagingly led me in to my mamma, who received

ceived me with joy, and him very politely ; at the same time thanked him and Mr. Warton for seeing me safe ; and upon my telling her he was many miles from home, she entreated him to take a bed, which he readily accepted. After he retired, my mother made many enquiries, and, without hesitation, I told her the whole that had passed. She seemed highly pleased with my candour, and received him at breakfast with the greatest cordiality and frankness. Of this he took the advantage, and preferred his suit, which he urged so powerfully, as to gain her consent to pay his addresses in form. She is, thank the Gracious Power, as well as we can expect her to be. She has often declared the chief object of her

wishes was to see me and my sister happily settled. Captain Wilson is now with us, having accepted an invitation to pass a few days here. Adieu, my dear friend, and forget me not to your beloved.

Your's sincerely,

K. HUET.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIII.

MRS. MITFORD

TO

MRS. WARTON.

DEAREST SISTER,

AFTER a pleasant journey, in which we had nothing to regret, but the separation which has taken place among us, we arrived in our dear village, and were received with great joy by all its inhabitants, who expressed a satisfaction little short of adoration at the sight of their noble and generous Patrons and benefactors. What heartfelt sensations of joy must those exalted

Personages feel, in being able to render so many industrious people happy ; and not only those, but others are likely to share the blessings they have diffused. Blessings I must call them ; for did my Selina know what I now feel, and what I have hitherto felt, on account of the industrious poor, among whom I have sojourned till this period of life, I should deeply awaken her sensibility, in a degree the extreme opposite of that joy I taste in my present incomparable state of happiness. I allude to those unhappy people of a distant region, who, merely because they differ from us in colour, are doomed to groan beneath the yoke of perpetual slavery. Can the tincture of the skin justify so cruel an exercise of authority ?—Or,
are

are the heavenly portals shut to all who are not of our own complexion?— Humanity shudders at the idea; and Religion forbids such a supposition.— But the feelings of the one, and the principles of the other, are sacrificed to a mercantile thirst for gain.

My brother, from his humane temper, was an excellent master; and often has it affected him to have under him as vassals, Chiefs, and even Princes, whom he has purchased like beasts, and almost to perform the same duties.— Many has he restored to liberty, and all he endeavoured to make comfortable under his care. But even this could not satisfy a heart capable of feeling for another's woes. Often has he lamented

his situation, and wished himself a labourer in his native country, the benignity of whose laws afford equal protection to the ermined Lord and the humble peasant.

The thought, however, of being able some time to do good, encouraged him to continue in the island, till he found one in whose integrity he could confide for the security of his property. In the young man who married our sister, he accomplished his wishes, and brought us to this land of freedom and unlooked-for happiness.

With this I send Sally Snowden, who I hope you will find worthy your choice ; Nanny Needful for Maria, and

Betsy

Betsy Harris for myself. Mr. Mitford takes for his assistants, Thomas Appleby and his wife; they are to have an apartment with us, and seem a happy couple, but I hope they are all so. Mr. Mitford would wish Mr. Warton to take William Conyers as a kind of bailiff, he being a tolerable scholar; by so doing, he thinks it will enable them to lay by for old age the little they gained by their marriage. Indeed, we ought to look upon them as brother and sister, since one and the same occasion rendered us what we are. My love to my brother, Mrs. Herbert, Maria, and Mr. Dean, and am dear Selina ever

Your's,

GEORGIANA WARTON.

LETTER XXXIV.

SIR HENRY EVELYN

TO

THE DUKE OF ———.

IN conformity to your request, I now give you my advice as brief as possible; and am sorry you should even hint at my ridiculing your present turn of mind: It is commendable and praiseworthy; and were I even the most thoughtless libertine, I should always, thank Heaven, revere virtue wherever I found it. I am more than charmed with your friends, and would have
thought

thought myself infinitely happy to have been of the party. Your account, indeed, was only superficial; but I have seen Townly, who has given me verbally a particular account of every circumstance; and I can assure you he is in the same predicament with yourself, only he has not the same doubts respecting his future happiness; he seems confident of it, and I wish him success. My advice to you, my dear friend is, to sound the lady's mind, and see that her attachment be not of an interested nature, then try her principles, and if you are therefrom satisfied of her having had a religious and virtuous education, you need no longer hesitate in making your proposals, candidly telling her what you expect in the married

state. If your courage be insufficient for this, transmit your thoughts by letter; this way you will find to save much trouble, and obtain a more ready and explicit answer. I do not wish you to have a prude for your wife—No, I only advise you to take care and have one whose morals have not been too much debased by a familiar intercourse with the fashionable world. You will best learn this from the past conduct of the Lady's parents. This is the only advice I can offer, and I wish you speedily to adopt it.—A Miss Foster is Townly's hope. I wish you both a happy celebration, and shall be proud of being present, and having the happiness of giving you a bride equal to your wishes.

Further

Further I request, that the celebration may be at your own seat, and that your tenants share your bounty. But I write as if all your expectations were answered—of this, however, I have but little doubt they will be; and beg leave to subscribe myself,

Your's sincerely,

HENRY EVELYN.

LETTER XXXV.

MR. WARTON

TO

MR. MITFORD.

DEAR FRIEND,

ACCEPT my sincere thanks for the most compleat happiness mortal ever enjoyed in possession of the most amiable of sisters. Accept my thanks also for contributing to the happiness of my beloved sister in an eminent degree, as she herself expresses it. Mr. Dean, that worthy man, must also be remembered by me with gratitude, for the affection he bears my dear Maria. Believe me,
my

my happiness would have been incomplete, if my sisters' had not been perfectly so. I rejoice with Selina and you in the happy union of the Captain and Matilda; though, I confess I rather repented our experiment. They are a pair rich in every virtue, and may nothing but remote old age ever dissolve their union. I thank you for your care of my domestic concerns, and with pleasure accept the person you recommend for my bailiff. I thought of doing the business myself; but the confinement would deprive me of the opportunity of enquiring after those victims of penury and want, whose necessities humanity instructs me to relieve. The Almighty Dispenser of all good things did not give me the talent I possess to
hide

hide it in the earth, and we only fulfil the purpose of our creation in mutually assisting each other.

I now request the correspondence I expected to commence on my first arrival, respecting our mutual history. That was, however, prevented by a combination of circumstances, which makes me less regret the suspension.— Every impediment being now removed, let us fairly and openly enter on the business, and be altogether domesticated. I claim the prior engagement; and, for myself, I shall most unreservedly unfold every particular of my progress through life, which has been marked in the beginning with good fortune, and crowned in the end with supreme happiness:

happinefs. In your life I do not expect a recapitulation of great exploits or adventures, but I long for an account of that godlike man, Lord C——, as it would be my greateft ambition to copy after fo perfect a model.

Your's ever,

T. WARTON.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVI.

MR. MITFORD

TO

MR. WARTON.

ESTEEMED FRIEND.

I RECEIVED your's, and so far as my small adventures run, chearfully comply with your requisition. You may remember I was sent for from school to attend my father's funeral, who died of an epidemic distemper; and from the close attention of my mother during his illness, together with the effect his death had on her more than common tenderness, she survived him
but

but a few days, leaving three orphan children unprotected; myself only about sixteen, Matilda eight, and Selina six years of age. I was a young guardian indeed you will say, but though so young, I found a secret something whisper me to protect these infants. From that moment I considered myself as their only parent. What my father left us was trifling, compared with the style in which we lived; we had a servant who lived with my mother from her infancy, and, with the consent of Mr. Wiseman, who was left an Executor, I retained her with us. Our whole portion left by my father was about two thousand pounds; but the salary he enjoyed from his post enabled him to live very genteel. As I had received a classical

fical.

fical education, I was urged by my friends to fix on some profession. Sometimes I was for the Church, sometimes for the bar, ever varying in my mind, as my wishes were not to leave my sisters, as in either case I must have done, had I chose one of those.

During this interval of thinking Mr. Spicer, an intimate friend of my father's, happening to call, the discourse turned on my future prospects; I candidly informed him my reasons for not chusing any profession. He commended me in the warmest terms; and kindly informed me my Lord C——'s stewardship was vacant; in which with frugality I might insure a comfortable living for my little family; at the same time observed

served my youth and inexperience ; but notwithstanding, assured me, if I approved it, my Lord would have no scruples, since his only wish was to do good. I had scarce presence of mind to thank him for so unexpected a mark of friendship, but with some hesitation told him it would be the height of my ambition to devote my future life to his service. He left me, promising to exert himself in my behalf, and said, he had no devote but if his Lordship had known the circumstances he would himself have proposed it; this you may be sure was a balsam for my spirits; for young as I was, the loss of my parents had given me a steadiness uncommon for my years. I was not long in suspense; Mr. Spicer wrote for me to attend

tend my Lord two days after he left me. I immediately set off with joy; but a timid modesty kept me within bounds. I waited on my friend, who immediately introduced me to his Lordship and his amiable Lady; they received me with the greatest affability, which removed the fears that had before depressed me; they condoled me on the loss of my parents; enquired minutely into my circumstances; of all which I informed them truly.

My Lord then spoke of his Stewardship; told me, if I approved of it, he would make me comfortable; and if I looked upon him and his Lady as parents, they would make themselves such to me and my sisters. Oh, my friend,

friend, what benignity shone forth in the countenances of these exalted Personages ; my grateful heart repressed the utterance of my tongue, and I vainly essayed to return my due acknowledgments. I bent on my knee, but they desired me to rise, saying that was a humiliation only due to the Deity, and could by no means be admitted by them. My silence they construed into the most effectual thanks I could give, for doing what they only looked upon as their duty, and begged me to retire with Mr. Spicer till dinner, when he would inform me what they should require of me. I bowed, and retired, and was glad of the opportunity to find vent for my tears, which my friend permitted for some moments.

When

When I began to collect myself, and consider the immense obligation, I begged him to inform me of my duty, as I no longer for nothing so much as to approve myself worthy the confidence those noble Personages had been pleased to honour me with. He left me about a quarter of an hour; when returning, he took me to the apartments allotted for my use, which was a genteel house adjoining his Lordship's, and the same you saw me in.

I was rather surpris'd to find such accommodations, and only lamented my want of abilities to serve so good a Patron. We found the house furnished in a style of elegance; but my friend
assured

assured me it always was the same for the Steward.

We were now summoned to dinner, for which I had but little appetite; but the obliging Lady C—— compelled me to take what I little wanted. After the cloth was removed, my Lord renewed the business, and told me that I should take my choice, either to keep a separate house till I was of age, or board with them till my sisters were capable of taking the domestic concerns of my house upon themselves; if I chose he would allow me two hundred pounds a year, and keep my own house, or one hundred and be in his family. Your sisters will be brought up in industry and œconomy, as my Lady, said the

2

good

good man, has always sufficient for young people to employ themselves in ; and they will, as children, I hope, be a comfort to her, since it has pleased Heaven to with-hold, for wise purposes, that blessing from us. He bid me consider well before I answered. I told him there was no consideration necessary. The last proposal seemed to beam from Heaven on us orphans in a most extraordinary degree and with their permission, I would gladly accept of the singular honor of becoming boarders with them ; as to terms I should be fully gratified with the proposals of residence which they had made, and only wished that I might be found worthy of them ; and as our patrimony would find us other necessaries, I thought my addition

tion would be an imposition on their unparalleled goodness. His Lordship seemed pleased, and her Ladyship embraced me with all the affection of a mother, and requested to know when I would bring her little daughter, who she said resembled their brother, and would soon share her warmest affection. I replied, that her Ladyship must determine upon that point. She said, then as soon as possible; we will go together in the carriage, and immediately bring them. We accordingly set off for the purpose. Matilda, who was the eldest, by her Ladyship's order, I first introduced to her new mother; she expressed her joy in once more having a mamma. Selina, who was two years younger, I then brought; her Ladyship embraced

them in the tenderest manner. “And
“will you,” said she, “my little dears,
“go and live with me? What says Se-
“lina?”—“Dear mamma, shall we
“ride in that coach? Is it your’s?”—
“Yes, my loves, you shall ride with
“me every day, if you are good, and
“dutiful to your papa and mamma.”
“What,” says Selina, “shall we have
“a papa too?”—“Yes,” rejoined her
Ladyship, “you shall have both, and
“you must love us as you used to do
“your papa and mamma.”—“Oh,”
exclaimed they both, “that we shall,
“for we always loved them; and,
“surely, we shall always love another
“papa and mamma as well, or else God
“will not love us, if we do not honour
“our parents.”

This

This innocent freedom of speech, I hope you will pardon the repetition of; it had a wonderful effect on me at the time, and not less so on the tender and benevolent feelings of her Ladyship; their simplicity perfectly charmed her, and she enquired for their attendant, the worthy woman I mentioned before; who, when she appeared, was bathed in tears, expecting to be separated from her little orphans.—“Are you willing,” said the good Lady, “to go with them?”——“Oh, Madam,” cried she, “it is the only wish I have in the world.”——“Well, you shall go with us; but I must enjoin you strictly to adhere to one thing.”——“Any thing,” said the poor woman, “that will not part us; I am willing

‘ to do what I am able ; I want no
“ wages, only the satisfaction of being
“ with them.”——“ What I require
“ then is, that you no more call these
“ children orphans; from this moment
“ I am their mother, and my husband
“ their father ; teach them their duty
“ to us, and I will be your friend
“ through life.”

The poor woman was almost frantic with joy. After some refreshment, we prepared to quit the domain long possessed by our parents. But her Ladyship, perfectly considering every circumstance, informed me, that as she must have an additional servant, if I chose to retain the one we had, the children being used to her, she would give her

her the preference. This being settled, orders were given for packing up our cloaths, &c. on the following day.

Thus you see, my dear friend, how wonderfully Providence interposed in our behalf. When we returned to my Lord's, he was waiting to receive us, and as soon as my Lady introduced the children to him, they clung about him, and with the most endearing prattle of youthful innocence melted into tears this venerable Nobleman. These good friends were so highly delighted with the talk of these little folks, that they would not suffer me to check them; having each one on their knee, and declaring themselves perfectly happy with infants so peculiarly placed by Provi-

dence under their care.—Oh, my friend, how can I describe my feelings on this occasion!—only a heart like your's can conceive them.

I sent for Mr. Wiseman, who I acquainted with my happy situation, and advised with him about the disposition of my affairs. We agreed to sell the furniture of the house, saving only a few valuables and family pictures. This being done, my whole family became tenants under the roof of these best of people; and under the joint tuition of his Lordship and Mr. Spicer, I soon became, as they were pleased to call me a dutiful son and faithful servant.—
Certain it is, I made every effort to obtain their good opinion, and their partiali
tiali

tiality overlooked my imperfections.— I found my Lord universally benevolent ; all his and her Ladyship's study was to promote the benefit of the indigent and afflicted ; none who deserved relief were proscribed from receiving of their munificence.

About this time my Lord was projecting a plan for a school for the general use of the children of poor parents resident on his manor, which is very extensive. His object was to cloath, board, and educate such as were admitted ; and, young as I was, he did me the honour to consult me on the subject. My Lord, Mr. Spicer, and myself, were each to produce a plan at a given period. I have not the

vanity to suppose mine was superior to theirs; but such was their goodness, that they adopted my plan, and immediately put it in execution; and I am fully persuaded their aim was only to excite emulation in me; for, inspired as it were by their approbation, I exerted myself with unremitting assiduity, that neither my labour nor their goodness should be in vain. Happily it was accomplished before I reached my eighteenth year, to the great satisfaction of his Lordship. But though I had all the merit, yet no assistance of his, or Mr. Spicer's, which they could give, without seeming to interrupt my plan, was ever wanting. You have seen my juvenile trial; yet as you wish me to be particular, I will give you the plan.

The

The center is the Chapel, for morning and evening prayers, which are read by the master; it is up one story; underneath is spacious school room, divided by railing into equal parts; the one side for boys, the other for girls; the wing to the right of the building is appropriated for the master's use, that to the left for the mistress; they are allowed a salary of forty pounds each, with coal and candle. On each side there are ten tenements, for the accommodation of twenty infirm people of both sexes, who are attended by the elder children of the schools. The front is an extensive play ground, railed like the school-room, which as they are open, does not prevent the communication, though it separates them from

K 5

each

each other. Behind there is a large kitchen-garden, and a manufactory, in which several busineffes are carried on, wherein the children, according to their capacities, are employed; the girls about three hours in the morning, the boys four in the afternoon. Here they manufacture their own cloaths and linnen, and almost every article which is worn by the poor of the village; this enables his Lordship to extend his benevolence much farther, than if he was to keep them without that industry.—The girls are taken by turns to assist in the household work, which renders more than the matron, who is appointed, at thirty pounds a year, to manage the domestic concerns, unnecessary.—On Sundays they dine in public.

Their

Their garden yields them plenty of vegetables ; their cows supply them with milk ; and, in short, they have in their little community, a small farm, in which the boys are occasionally employed, in digging the ground, and every other requisite of husbandry ; so that when of age to leave the school, they are capable of earning their living.

Such are the particulars of the school. I now proceed to inform you of the manner of living of my Lord and Lady. —Possessed of about ten thousand pounds a year fortune, they live in an hospitable manner at about half that sum ; but having a compleat farm, his revenue derives great benefit from it. Those people who are unable to work
are

are placed in the apartments I mentioned, where they are provided with every comfortable necessary from his Lordship's table, and even luxuries when needful. On a Sunday he dines early, and that in the servants' hall, where a surprising profusion of roast beef, boiled mutton, and puddings, is provided; to which all the family sit down, with the Steward, Housekeeper, Butler, Lady's maid, and, in short, all the upper servants, to partake of this weekly meal, which they often declare to be the best they make. They sit a very short time; and on their retiring, the doors of an anti-chamber are thrown open, when the other servants, with as many of the villagers as chuse to come, sit down to dinner, at which the cook presides.

presides. When they have done the remainder is divided among their families, and a horn of ale given to each. Thanks is then returned by his Lordship's second Chaplain, who attends for the purpose. The greatest order and decorum is preserved throughout, lest a breach of it should forfeit them this valuable privilege. It is needless to mention our private exercises on that day, you having already expressed your approbation of them.

Thus, my friend, did I prosper, and, together with my sisters, daily grow in favour; quitting their infantine simplicity, they soon learnt to venerate these best of benefactors. My Lady had a principal hand in their education, and

Mr. Spicer taught them the languages, in which, I am proud to say, they are not a little proficient. Our school was soon filled, and children were taken in at four years old, which afforded great relief to their poor parents. His Lordship, in order to excite emulation among these young scholars, caused some trifle to be given every Monday to the one who best went through the week's exercises. This produced the desired effect, for they, in general, did credit to their teachers.

His Lordship and Lady are both great advocates for matrimony; and, for a number of years have given a marriage portion to four couple of good character who might apply for it; and

at

at the Easter recess, if more than that number offer, they are voted for, tho' seldom any are rejected. They never receive less than fifty pounds, and if there be but four couple, more.

The custom is thus : At Easter, my Lord gives a ball at his own room to as many as choose to send for tickets, for which no one pays less than half a guinea ; and as every one pays, he gives no particular invitations ; but there are few of the gentry within forty or fifty miles who do not attend. The names sent are entered in a book, and the whole subscription equally divided among those for whom it is raised. If it amounts to less than fifty pounds each, his Lordship makes up the sum.

This

This, indeed, seldom happens, as they often share near one hundred pounds each. Supper, and every refreshment, is given at his Lordship's sole expence, and beds are provided for as many as wish to stay the night.

Such is the annual marriage festival, which has for its end domestic happiness and conjugal love ; for by means of this little dowry, they are enabled to begin the world with decency and industry When an increase of family takes place, on notice being given to her Ladyship, my sisters are employed in providing every kind of necessary for the young strangers, as also for the mother during her confinement. One or other of them visits every day, and the Doctor of the village is paid yearly

for his attendance: Every one within its boundary is happy and satisfied with their condition, and hence has it justly acquired its present name—The Vale of Felicity.

My sisters were introduced to this kind of visitation as soon as her Ladyship thought it decent to take children with her, and they soon became adepts in the art of nursing. Thus glides on our time, year after year, in acts of benevolence to our fellow-creatures.—When I came of age, the event was celebrated with as much festivity as on a recent occasion, though not so much joy to me, in receiving Heaven's purest gift in the person of your amiable sister.

My

My benefactors at this time wished me to begin housekeeping ; but which I, however, declined till Matilda attained her eighteenth year, when I commenced master of a family, and continued so two years, till you, my friend came and interrupted our regularity, by perfecting our bliss.

I need repeat no more ; and hope your pardon, if I have been too prodigal of my own or sisters' merit. I am certain I have not done justice to those exalted characters, under whose patronage and protection both me and my sisters have been so honourably reared. Words would weakly express the sense I have of the obligation—of their merits, and of my own unworthiness.—

Ever

Ever shall a grateful recollection of their unnumbered kindneffes dwell in my heart—when we were poor and unfriended, they cherished and supported us—they shielded us young and tender shrubs from the blights of misfortune and adversity, and happily transplanted us into a real Vale of Felicity.

Your's sincerely,

T. MITFORD.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

of the

to the collection of
the British Museum
the following objects
were presented
to the Trustees
of the British Museum
on the 1st day of
March 1869



THE BRITISH MUSEUM

